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'Sensitivity training' catches on

Atlanta's talks ease racial bias

Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — For the last three years, an Atlanta man has been conducting seminars on minority relations for the CIA to help the agency identify prejudices among its employees.

The success of the CIA seminars taught by Dr. Charles King, director of the Urban Crisis Center in Atlanta, has caught on with at least one congressman.

Rep. Howard Wolpe (D-Mich.) recently put his own staff through an intense two-day session with King to help them better understand the problems of minorities.

Wolpe is now trying to convince his colleagues in Congress to undergo the same kind of "sensitivity training."

"We found that the sessions with Dr. King helped us identify more clearly examples of racism within our own environment and within our



DR. KING: Helping CIA

own "psyches," said Steve Gools, Wolpe's press secretary.

"The congressman thought it would help us to be more sensitive to our own constituents."

In addition, Gools said, the training

will be helpful to Wolpe's staff in putting together future legislation dealing with minority issues.

In the last 13 years, King has taught the seminars at government agencies and private businesses.

The CIA first hired King in 1980 after Avon Harding, director of the agency's Office of Equal Employment, noticed a high turnover in women and minority personnel.

"One reason was possibly because of biases expressed at work," Harding said this week. "I found that (some employees) felt there was a difference, for example, between how whites were managed and the way blacks were managed. It wasn't any kind of blatant discrimination, but some people noticed it."

King was brought in, Harding said, to help CIA department managers and other personnel "become more aware of their own prejudices and also the cultural differences between people."

"Since we started, we've noticed that there's been more dialogue and a more honest exchange of feelings among our people," he said.

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